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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: APRIL 30, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of a fresh wave of ethnic violence in Karachi killing at least 25 people dominated headlines in all newspapers on Thursday. Newspapers also reported that the Sindh administration had issued "shoot at sight" orders to security forces in Karachi. All newspapers front paged reports that the "military took over control of Buner district headquarters, Daggar" and "recovered 18 of the 70 kidnapped security personnel." All major dailies highlighted report that a "missile attack by a suspected U.S. drone killed six militants, two of them foreigners, in South Waziristan." President Obama's remarks that "Al Qaeda and the Taliban are the 'single most direct threat' to U.S. national security" received prominent display.

Most major dailies ran editorials on the ongoing military operation in Buner and Dir districts, its repercussions, and prospects of Nizam-i-Adl in the changed scenario. Commenting on the impending disaster of the internal displacement, the center-right national daily "The Nation," editorialized that the "scale of human suffering caused by military operations is so great that the government cannot afford to wait for foreign assistance." The popular rightist daily "Ausaf," advised Taliban to "lay down their arms, as not only the inhabitants of Swat and Buner, but also the entire Pakistani nation are fed up with clashes and armed conflicts between militants and the security forces." The Lahore-based liberal English daily, "Daily Times," observed that "after the 'disclosure' in Swat about Sufi Muhammad's real intent, the entire nation, including the clerical consensus, is in favor of stopping the onward march of the law of the jungle that the Taliban insist on calling Sharia." End Summary.

News Stories

"Widespread Violence Afflicts Karachi; 25 Lives Lost; 20 Vehicles Torched" "Dawn" (04/30)

"At least 25 people were killed and over 40 others injured in a fresh wave of ethnic violence in different parts of Karachi on Wednesday. About 20 vehicles were torched. Tension and panic gripped parts of the city as unidentified attackers went on a shooting spree, killing most of the victims at point - blank range, city Police Chief Wasim Ahmed told 'Dawn.'"

"'Shoot At Sight' Orders Issued" "dawn" (04/30)

"Minister of State for Ports and shipping, Nabeel Gabol, has said that Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah and Home Minister Zulfiqar

Ali Mirza have issued 'shoot at sight' orders to security forces in Karachi. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has ordered an inquiry in the new wave of violence in the city."

"Militants To Benefit From Karachi Violence: Zardari" "The News" (04/30)

"President Asif Ali Zardari while strongly condemning the violence in Karachi, which caused loss of precious human lives, said on Wednesday it is time to exhibit the national unity. The President said the nation could ill afford violence in Karachi at a time when it was already dealing with the militants in the northern parts of the country. President Zardari said the ongoing fight against militants called for a national consensus and for all political parties to join hands."

"Troops Take Over The Reins Of Daggar" "The News" (04/30)

"The military on Wednesday took over control of Buner district headquarters, Daggar, in the two-day operation killing some 50 militants including two high-value targets - Maulvi Shahid and Qari Quresh - are among the 50 militants killed so far in Buner when gunship helicopters targeted militants' positions during the operation launched on Tuesday afternoon, Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Athar Abbas said while updating newsmen on the Buner operation in Rawalpindi."

"18 Of 70 Kidnapped Security Men Recovered: ISPR" "The News" (04/30)

"Military spokesman Maj-Gen Athar Abbas said at a press briefing in Islamabad on Wednesday that 18 of the 70 security personnel kidnapped from Sultanwas had been recovered from Karakar."

"Six Militants Killed In U.S. Drone Strike" "Dawn" (04/30)

"Missile attack by a suspected US drone killed six militants, two of them foreigners, in a village in the Ladha sub-division of South Waziristan on Wednesday. Sources said the militants belonged to the group of Baitullah Mehsud."

"Panic In Swat As Drones Appear In The Skies" "The News" (04/30)

"U.S. drones flew over parts of the troubled Swat Valley on Wednesday, creating panic in the war weary population. Locals said they saw drones hovering over Khwazakhela, Charbagh, Matta and Kabal early Wednesday."

"Single-Most Direct Threat" "Dawn" (04/30)

"Al Qaeda and the Taliban are the 'single most direct threat' to U.S. national security, President Barack Obama said on Wednesday. 'In Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan we do have real problems with the Taliban and Al Qaeda,' Mr. Obama said at a town hall meeting in Missouri."

"Pakistan Concerned Over U.S. Plan" "Dawn" (04/30)

"Pakistan has voiced concern that U.S. reinforcements in Afghanistan's south could push Taliban insurgents and refugees over its porous border, a U.S. general said on Wednesday. The Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, General James Conway, said Pakistan's Military Chief, General Kayani, conveyed his worry about a planned push by the U.S. military in southern Afghanistan in a recent meeting, Conway told reporters in Washington."

"Biden Asks Pakistan Not To View India Enemy" "The News" (04/30)

"Describing Pakistan as a 'badly fractured country,' U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has said Islamabad needs a 'cultural change' to view that India is not its enemy. 'This is a badly fractured country ... that in one sense has made great strides,' Biden said at a fundraiser in Houston in response to a question."

"U.S. Split Over Missile Strikes In Balochistan" "The News" (04/30)

"The Obama administration appears divided over whether CIA missile

strikes should be used against Taliban safe havens across the border in Pakistan's restive Balochistan Province, said U.S. officials who spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity."

"U.S. Media Creating Panic Over Taliban Threat: Haqqani" "The News" (04/30)

"Pakistan has criticized U.S. media's 'panicked reactions' over the growing Taliban threat, saying the campaign was not conducive to strengthening Pakistani democracy or to developing an effective counter-terrorism policy for the country. Ambassador Husain Haqqani wrote in The Wall Street Journal, referring to his government's strong military countermeasures against the militants."

"Pakistan Shifting 6,000 Troops To Western Front: NYT" "The Nation" (04/30)

"As Pakistan presses on its military offensive in Buner under intense U.S.-led international pressure, the government has agreed to move 6,000 troops from the Indian border to fight militants on its western border with Afghanistan, a leading American newspaper reported on Wednesday."

"Pakistan Allows U.S. Greater Role In Military Training" "The News" (04/30)

"Pakistan has agreed to allow the U.S. a greater role in training its military, part of an accord that will also send counter-insurgency equipment to help Islamabad step up its offensive against the militants, according to Los Angeles Times."

"Quetta-Based Taliban Move To Karachi to Escape U.S. Wrath" "The Nation" (04/30)

"Fearing U.S. drone attacks, a large number of Taliban's Afghan leaders have shifted from Quetta to Karachi, Peshawar and other parts of the country, 'The Nation' has learned from some highly reliable sources."

"Islamabad To Insist On Border Control Steps On Afghan Side" "The News" (04/30)

"The two key Afghanistan-related issues that the Pakistan side is likely to raise at the trilateral negotiations in Washington next week will focus on border crossings, according to informed sources."

"Kabul-Taliban Secret Talks Make No Headway" "The Nation" (04/30)

"The U.S.-backed secret talks between the Taliban and Karzai-led Afghan government have hitherto proved unsuccessful despite months' long facilitation by Saudi Arabia for the success of these negotiations, said a diplomatic source seeking anonymity."

"Police Party Ambushed On Motorway" "Dawn" (04/30)

"Suspected militants ambushed a police patrol unit on the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway (M-1) on Wednesday, seriously injuring an officer, a senior official told 'Dawn.' 'Around 30 militants hiding behind trees ambushed the patrol vehicle and fired a rocket-propelled grenade which did not hit the target, official sources said."

"Operation An Attempt To Make Points With U.S.: TTP" "The News" (04/30)

"The ongoing Buner operation is just to please the United States and these types of operation are neither in the interest of the Taliban nor of the government, Muslim Khan, spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Swat chapter, said this while responding to a question by 'The News' over telephone on Wednesday."

"Afghan Taliban Announce To Launch Summer Offensive; Warn Of Attacks On Govt. Installations, U.S., NATO Forces" "The News" (04/30)

"The Afghan Taliban on Wednesday announced to launch their summer offensive against the U.S.-led coalition troops from today (Thursday). 'Arrangements are in place for the Operation Nusrat

(victory) during which military installations of the U.S. and Afghan troops and senior government officials and members of parliament will be targeted,' a Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said. In a telephonic chat with 'The News' from an undisclosed location, Mujahid said the Taliban had strengthened their intelligence network and sent several experienced people for collecting information about the military camps of the U.S. and the NATO forces in various parts of the country."

"Situation In Conflict-Hit Areas Quite Serious: ICRC Chief" "Dawn" (04/30)

"The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Jakob Kellenberger, has described the humanitarian situation in the conflict-hit areas of NWFP and FATA as quite serious, while talking to journalists in Peshawar on Wednesday."

"Pakistan, U.S. To Develop Agriculture In Afghanistan" "Dawn" (04/30)

"Pakistan and the United States have decided to work for developing agriculture in Afghanistan. The decision was taken at a meeting held in Islamabad on Wednesday between Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture Ziaur Rehman and U.S. Administrator of Foreign Agriculture Service Michael Michener."

"Balochistan Schools Abandon National Anthem, Senate Told" "The News" (04/30)

"A nationalist legislator, Mir Hasil Bizenjo, stunned the Senate on Wednesday when he revealed that the national anthem was no more in vogue in the Balochistan schools, following the killing of three Baloch leaders."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Impending Disaster," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/30)

"While a three-day-long military operation in Lower Dir sent about 30,000 civilians scurrying for shelter to adjoining districts, the Buner operation would add thousands more to the internally displaced persons in NWFP who now reportedly total one million.... Unless a multi-billion dollar reconstruction and rehabilitation program is launched in FATA, the devastated area would continue to be a hotbed of extremism. The scale of human suffering caused by military operations is so great that the government cannot afford to wait for foreign assistance."

"Military Operation In Buner Following Dir," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (04/30)

"It is not wrong to say that the present military operation is an outcome of the Taliban's blunders. In fact, following the peace agreement in Swat, it was needless for militants to penetrate into Buner and other adjoining areas. Instead, they could wait for the implementation of the deal. Nevertheless now situation is somewhat different, and fighting with the state and the security forces is not in the national interest, as it is tantamount to revolt. Taliban should lay down their arms, as not only the inhabitants of Swat and Buner, but also the entire Pakistani nation are fed up with clashes and armed conflicts between militants and the security forces."

"Civil Society Against Taliban," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/30)

"It is not useful to decide here who is right and who is wrong. After the 'disclosure' in Swat about Sufi Muhammad's real intent, the entire nation, including the clerical consensus, is in favor of stopping the onward march of the law of the jungle that the Taliban insist on calling Sharia. This unity is precious because it frees the ANP in Peshawar from its compulsion to parley with the Taliban in the face of national passivity. It also gives the Pakistan Army the signal to undertake an operation backed by the entire nation."

It is immaterial if the 'foreign elements' are pleased or displeased by this development."

"Help The Displaced," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"The government is right in asking for international assistance for these victims of the conflict raging in northern Pakistan.... It is imperative that people in dire need are taken care of by the state. Failure to do so will breed more resentment which will be readily tapped by the Taliban. If abandoned by the state, children and youth who have grown up in conflict zones and now have no options may easily choose to side with the militants.... The government has to stop dragging its feet on this tinderbox issue. The scale of the problem is only going to increase if the recent operations in Dir and Buner are part of a wider, sustained strategy."

"Military Operation And IDPs; Don't Depend On Promises Of International Aid" an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/30)

"Although the military operation was started to establish the writ of the state, yet extremism will increase as a result of the operation and drone strikes. In such a climate, how will the government establish its writ.... The government must immediately reconsider its policy of launching a military operation in view of the massive displacement and the resultant problems. The government should focus on rehabilitating the internally displaced persons. The government should not rely on promises of foreign assistance."

"U.S. Aid For Pakistan And Demands To 'Do More'," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (04/30)

"In addition to the Kashmir dispute, the issue of water distribution between India and Pakistan is also taking a turn for the worse. Violating the Indus Water Treaty, India is depriving Pakistan of its share of river water. India is also helping 'rebels' in Balochistan and is engaged in spreading unrest and turmoil in the province. The U.S. should focus on trying to resolve Indo-Pak disputes. Pakistan would be in a better position once the Kashmir and water disputes are resolved and India stops interfering in Balochistan. U.S. generals and other representatives keep asking Pakistan to 'do more' - but do not focus on the jobs that really need to be done."

"Pakistan Army Being Provoked By Americans," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (04/30)

"Pakistani government has rejected media reports that the military operation in Buner and Dir was launched under U.S. pressure. Who is going to believe this assertion? A spokesman for the Pentagon has explicitly welcomed military operation in these areas, and has expressed full support for Pak Army and the government. There is hardly any doubt left now that the operation is aimed to appease the Americans, and it is being carried out on their diktats."

"Political Leadership Should Show Maturity," editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (04/30)

"U.S. military leadership has expressed dissatisfaction over Pakistan's capacity to deal with extremists effectively. There are also some reports that that Pakistan Army can take over government again. These reports are concerted efforts to destabilize Pakistan. Had President Obama taken interest in stability and peace in the world, he would have definitely pulled out troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, and allow people of these countries to decide their future."

"Admiral Mullen's Statement And Political Leadership's Silence," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (04/30)

"Expressing concern at the increasing extremism in Pakistan, Admiral Mullen has termed it a threat for Pakistan and said that Pakistan's political leadership does not have the capability to face the increasing threat of extremism.... For some time now, we have been reading reports that U.S. officials are annoyed with President

Zardari and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif is now their favorite. We feel that the sole objective of this is to put pressure to achieve [U.S.] objectives. The N-League needs to clarify its position and assure the government of full support to strengthen democracy. It is surprising that the political leadership has not expressed any reaction at this statement by the U.S. admiral. Perhaps our leaders did not want to complicate matters further or perhaps they are so occupied in political wrangling that they did not find time to respond to it."

"Pakistan Submits To U.S. Pressure," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (04/30)

"It was clear from the very first day of signing of the peace deal in Swat that Americans were not happy over the development and several U.S. officials openly expressed reservations over the agreement. Since then, both some local and foreign quarters had been conspiring to derail the peace process and things moved slowly towards resumption of hostilities.... If this was war of Pakistan then the country should fight it in its own way and there should be no arms twisting or interference from abroad. This also proves that neither the Governor nor Parliament has the power to frame and pursue policies as these are made in America."

"Military Operation Not A Solution," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (04/30)

"There are some reports that the government is pondering to evolve a new national defense strategy to make certain the internal and external security of Pakistan. It is perhaps the ideal time to review the strategy about the war on terror, and the Pakistan foreign policy. Pakistan should assume an approach to resolve all issues by itself. Military operation is not a solution of problems, instead peaceful negotiations is the best approach to establish peace, and it will also help us to divest ourselves of the U.S. pressure."

"Uncertainty For How Long?," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"It is not pertinent for the NWFP administration to get in touch with Sufi Mohammad for every issue in Swat valley, in fact this approach exposes its weakness and failing to make a decision and act independently. The provincial administration will have to make decisions instantly, as time is passing very fast. Perhaps the institution of the 'Darul-Qaza' (appellate courts) may calm down the infuriated people of Malakand division, who are longing for a speedy judicial system."

"Fighting Militancy," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/30)

"The people of Pakistan are entitled to expect that the government will now address the militancy problem in earnest. There is no denying the fact that the writ of the state has been challenged by the militants, therefore the government should give top priority to restoring it.... The events in Buner appear to be a test case for the government and it has to prove with its action that enough is enough."

"The Need To Face Dangers Resolutely," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (04/30)

"The responsibility for peace in Swat rests squarely on Taliban and Sufi Muhammad's shoulders - a task in which they have disappointed the nation. Instead of ushering a new era of peace in the area, extremists took aggressive steps there, occupied more areas and plunged every Pakistani into the depths of fear and panic. Obviously, no government will tolerate such hypocrisy. It was in this context that the Army Chief gave extremists the clear message that they should not consider the concession given to them as a weakness of the Pakistan Army.... In the backdrop of Dir and Buner, those in power must now make long term decisions. Militancy is a monster and terrorism a global virus - comprehensive international efforts are needed to break its network."

"Changing Tide?," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left

independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"The Pakistan Army has made it clear that it wants the politicians to develop a consensus on using the military option. In the case of Lower Dir and Buner, it is perhaps for the first time that consensus has been present and the army has duly acted.... But the stomach for a prolonged military confrontation does not appear to exist, and the politicians may yet thwart an expansion of the military operation into Swat and elsewhere.... Perhaps more than anything else feeding the national confusion on the militancy problem is the continuing belief that not all militants are bad, that some are 'controllable' and that some are simply uninterested in ever turning their guns on the Pakistan state. But reality suggests otherwise: ideology, the survival instinct and sometimes purely tactical considerations have created interconnections between the various militant groups to the point where it makes little strategic sense to try and defeat one set without acting against the others."

"Back To Arms," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"Finally, after a lull that has simply allowed militants to re-group, re-arm and re-plan, a military operation has resumed.... It is time we stopped shuffling our feet like hesitant schoolboys. It has become necessary to go after the Taliban with all the force we can muster.... We need to shake it off so that a more pleasant vision for the future can replace it.... There must not be any doubt as to who the enemy is or the kind of threat these forces pose.... What we need now is to see action and a demonstration that there is a true willingness to take on the thugs who have been responsible for a wave of crime which they, as yet, have not in any way been penalized for."

"Taliban's Warning To Journalists," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (04/30)

"Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat has warned taking pro-west journalist to Shariat courts.... The warning states that for the last one week, coverage by the news agencies is giving them the impression that perhaps journalists are following a pro-west policy due to greed or that they are under some pressure.... The only reason for Pakistanis' reaction to drone strikes is because innocent Pakistanis are also being killed in these attacks. Similarly, innocent Pakistanis are also dying in suicide attacks in various cities. It is these suicide attacks that have created an anti-Taliban reaction. The promises made by Sufi Muhammad should have been implemented. Taliban should avoid display of weapons and avoid taking steps that cause problems for the public. The media will certainly report such steps, but they should not be labeled as pro-west."

"Media In The Middle," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"By caving in without a word to the Taliban, our politicians have aided in paving the way for this. The Taliban are clearly eager to control all thought and stifle all dissent. Unable to resort to reasoned debate, they use threat as the means to achieve this. It must be made clear to them that they cannot hope to succeed."

"Clear And Present Danger From The Taliban," an op-ed by Ikram Sehgal in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"The well-intentioned but ill-advised game plan for peace put the Army into a no-win Catch-22 situation, damned for not doing enough when they were in fact on the verge of success, damned as such by some for doing too much. The Army has to wake up as to who is badmouthing them, why, and more crucially, where?... The Taliban in Swat constitute a 'clear and present danger' to the state of Pakistan. That danger needs to be eliminated."

"Pakistan's Neo-Taliban," an op-ed by I.A. Rehman in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"Pakistan has become vulnerable because its democratic institutions are not worthy of being so described, because its rapacious elite

offers no quarter to the poor, because its justice system does not enjoy the people's confidence, because it does not offer a fair return to the peasant and the worker, because it guarantees neither dignity to women nor gainful education and employment to the youth. It is these weaknesses of the state that has made the neo-Taliban look more menacing than they are.... The neo-Taliban have lost all claim to leniency; they must be made to face the full might of the state, except for those who can be trusted with mending their ways."

"Injustice And Talibanization," an op-ed by Dr. Tariq Rahman in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"The Taliban did not show patience but started advancing into Buner and Dir almost immediately after their victory in Swat, the press turned indignant. Judging by letters, columns, the statements of political leaders and opinion-makers the public is ready to oppose the Taliban.... If people have realized that they will never get justice of any kind under Taliban rule, then it is something we can build upon and win our war against the Taliban. Are we ready for that?"

"Surrender And Hope," an op-ed by Abira Ashfaq in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/30)

"Intriguingly, the United States picks up the violation of shrines as human rights violations and conveniently and significantly ignores the tremendous disabilities of illiteracy and poverty in the area and the devastation its own drones are causing in the lives of the people in FATA. They remain fuzzy about democratic rights - doling out packages for legal and other social reforms. The US's main interests can be divided into two: strategic which means establishment of bases in Central Asia and Pakistan and economic, which means exploitation and exploration of indigenous resources, access to warm water ports in the region, creation of new and vibrant markets for its goods and services, selling advanced and recycled weaponry, and testing its advanced weaponry on the poor and dispossessed of FATA."

"Between Two Fundamentalists," an op-ed by Dr. Mubashir Hasan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/30)

"Pakistan has worked itself in a squeeze between two fundamentalists: the United States of America and the 'Taliban.'... Both believe in imposing their doctrines through violent means. Both are engaged in a brutal bloody war with each other.... On the other hand, the elites of Pakistan are obliged to compromise their loyalty to the United States by not acting against the opinion of an overwhelming majority of the people of Pakistan."

"Flip-Flopping In Malakand," an op-ed by Aziz-ud-Din Ahmad in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/30)

"What is needed is to strengthen local resistance to the Taliban, something badly neglected all along.... There is a need on the part of the political leadership and the army to jointly evolve a strategy aimed at reducing the damage to the population. The victory in the fight against insurgency invariably goes to the side which is better able to win the hearts and minds of people. This requires that political aspects are given primary consideration while conducting military operations."

"United We Stand," an op-ed by Mohammad Jamil in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/30)

"Anti-Pakistan forces - internal and external - stand united today to destabilize the country because they cannot digest a strong and nuclear Pakistan. The forces that had opposed the creation of Pakistan, now in their bid to prove that their stance was correct are advancing the enemies' agenda by supporting the diabolical forces.... India, the U.S. and Israel have coalesced to weaken and destabilize Pakistan to show to the world that the Pakistani nuclear arsenal is not safe and militants have the chance to take over the control of the entire country."
Feierstein